

# THE STATE IS NOT FOR SALE, MR. BACHACHAN

■ *By Dr. M. N. Buch*

Amitabh Bachchan has recently stated at Bhopal that he supports the proposal of the Chief Minister to rename the city as BHOJPUR. Amitabh is the son-in-law of a Bhopal based family, but he is not a son of the soil. He has no knowledge of the history of Bhopal, with no stake in the city because he lives in Bombay, (I refuse to call it Mumbai unless I speak in Marathi or Gujarati) and with considerable property interests in UP, why has he jumped into the fray? Is it because our CM has hinted that Amitabh may be made the brand ambassador of MP?

Amitabh has a chequered political life. His mother, Teji Bachchan, was a close confidant of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Amitabh and Jaya were close to Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi. It is after Rajiv's death that Amitabh fell under the spell of the political wheeler dealer, Amar Singh and gravitated towards Mulayam Singh Yadav. However, when the Shiv Sena went gunning for Amitabh because he wanted to invest in social infrastructure in UP whereas Shiv Sena felt he should do something for the city and the state, Maharashtra, where he achieved fame, Amitabh grovelled before Bal Thakarey and touched his feet. He then curried favour with Narendra Modi and was declared brand ambassador of Gujarat tourism. He obviously wants to repeat this feat in Madhya Pradesh.

I have separately written on the proposal to rename Bhopal. I consider the proposal to be unfounded, illogical, divisive, negative, onomatopoeically jarring (so look up the dictionary meaning) and aesthetically and historically unacceptable. All this, of course, is lost on our actor friend, for whom, obviously, "All the world's a stage". Well, Mr. Bachchan, we live in the real world, not in a Madhushala, or a fantasy world. Therefore, please lay off.

Which brings me to the question of brand ambassadorship. Companies which have something to sell often pick up eminent personalities whose support for a brand may help it to sell. Tag Heur, a swiss watch company has a brand ambassador. Another watch company has Aishwarya Rai (is it a coincidence that she is Amitabh's daughter-in-law?) as brand ambassador. But why do Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh have to sell themselves? Governance is not a commodity, it is a means to further the welfare of the citizens. Good government always wins the support of people. Narendra Modi returned to power because of the record of his government, not because Amitabh sold a pup to the people. So did Nitish Kumar and Navin Patnaik. I hope the MP government has good governance to offer to the citizens and to be judged thereby. A sales pitch by Amitabh will not swing the pendulum in BJP's favour.

What MP needs is firm, consistent, honest, objective, development oriented government, free of communal bias, ready to listen to people and eager to promote welfare. What it does not need is a brand ambassador who

“ Struts and frets his way across the stage,

Full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing”

(Macbeth, William Shakespeare).

This state is not for sale, Amitabh, nor the name of its capital city available for being kicked around like a football. Therefore, please back off and leave us alone.

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